Relocation Planning for *Military Families with Special Needs*

Employee Relocation Council
Dallas, Texas

Dr. Rebecca Posante
Educational Opportunities Directorate
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
Personnel and Readiness
rebecca.posante@osd.mil

Military Lifestyle

- Frequent moves
  - Every 24-48 months
  - Average 12 times in a 20 year career
- Frequent separations (deployments)
- Families separated from extended family support

What does this mean for military children (or spouses) with special health care or educational needs and their families?

Meet Amber

- She is 16.
- Her dad is in the Military.
- Her family is a Military Family.

Amber's story

- Amber has cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder, severe asthma, and multiple allergies.
- Amber cannot walk, talk, feed herself, nor can she be subjected to temperatures above 80 degrees.
- Her dad has been in the military for 20 years, has been fully deployable during all of

Amber is fortunate.

She has a great family.

Her father works.

She has health care.

Her mom stays home to care for her.

As an American, she is eligible for a number of services.

But….

Her family is facing their fifth move.

- They must address the same relocation issues all military families face….
- AND, at every move, her mom and dad must address a whole host of other issues to access the services she must have to maintain a quality of life.

What must the family do?

For every service, the family must::

- Identify the agencies that provide service in the new community.
- Determine the State-specific eligibility criteria, and whether the family meets these criteria.
- Maintain documentation, which varies by program.
- Re-complete paperwork, which also varies.
- Hope that the needed services will be re-instated in time.

What did they face?

- Denial of *Supplemental Security Income* (SSI) twice in one State because her disability was not “severe enough.”
- Loss of *Medicaid* when her father got a promotion to E6 --- family made too much money ($26,900).
- 6-9 months without services at each move as her parents re-established each one.
- Loss of SSI when father was on a one year tour overseas.
- Placement in inappropriate special education services.

Federal programs are administered by *State* agencies, which means that from State to State, programs may not:

- Use a common name
  - Early intervention programs – Kids First, LEEP, Early Start, EDIS, ……
- Be administered by the same agency
  - Early intervention – State Departments of education, public health, economic development

Federal Programs (administered by the States) may:

- Have different eligibility criteria.
  - WIC – States may include or exclude Basic Allowance for Housing
  - WIC-Overseas – includes “in-kind” housing as income, WIC (Stateside) does not.
  - Medicaid – States may provide “waiver” programs that offer services to families who would not be eligible in other States.

- Have different levels of funding.
  - Medicaid is not an entitlement.
  - When a state has spent all of its funds, the program may establish a waiting list.
  - The wait may be more than three years.

Federal Programs (administered by the [illegible]nay:

- Not offer the <u>same benefits</u>
  - Although required by law, not all school districts provide a continuum of special education services.
  - Medicaid waivers may provide a level of service unavailable in another location.

DoD Initiatives

Website for military families

www.EFMconnections.org

www.EFMconnections.org

- Information and referral site for EFMs
- Provides information at National and State levels
- On programs and services available to EFMs
- On and off the installation
- Provides mechanism for families to access people who can help
- For families to contact each other

www.EFMconnections.org

- E-mail capabilities
  - EFMP Coordinators by State and Installation
  - DoDEA special education coordinators
- Glossary - All DoD terms, IDEA terms, acronyms, etc…
- Family Stories - Illustrating services
- Family Connections – links families to families
- Will link to SITES and the Family Relocation Checklist - to assist families in re-accessing care

DoD Seminar

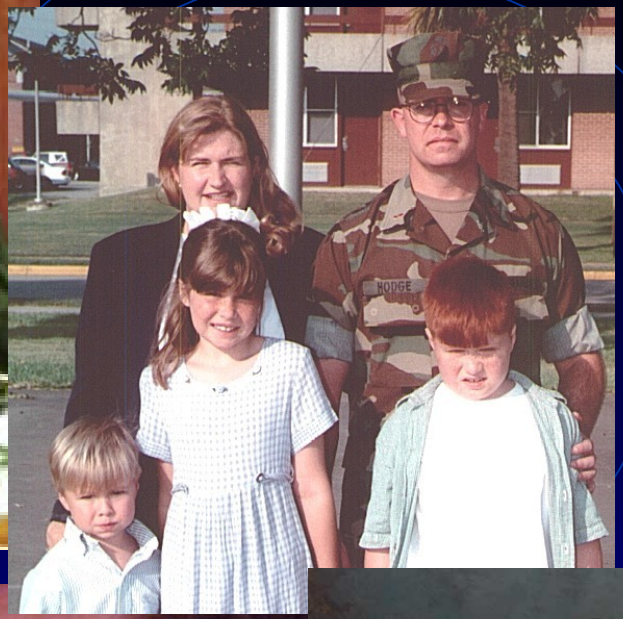
- June 18-20, 2003
- Seminar for family support personnel
- Objective – to provide a “toolkit” of information and resources to assist special needs families in accessing services
- Targeting specifically families during relocation.

Participants

- TRICARE
- Centers for Medicaid and Medicare
- DoD Education and U.S. Dept. of Education
- Social Security Administration
- Health and Human Services
- Non-profit organizations
- Advocacy and Training

DoD Seminar: Improving the Quality of Life for Military Families with Special Needs

www.DoDSeminar.org



USO